

Application No. 09/354,815
Amendment dated March 15, 2006
Reply to Office Action of January 17, 2006

REMARKS

Status Of Application

Claims 1-18 were pending in the application; the status of the claims is as follows:

Claims 1, 6, and 11 are objected to because of informalities.

Claims 1-3, 6-8, and 11-13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,327,423 B1 (the correct Patent No. should read 6,327,423 and not 6,427,423 as stated in the Office Action) to Ejima et al. ("Ejima") in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,012,271 to Nishimura et al. ("Nishimura").

Claims 4, 5, 9, 10, 14, and 15 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ejima in view of Nishimura, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,424,772 to Aoki et al. ("Aoki").

Claims 16-18 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Claim Amendments

Claims 1, 6, and 11 have been amended to incorporate allowable subject matter. These changes do not introduce any new matter.

The Office Action states that claim 16 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the subject matter of claim 16, which depends directly from claim 1. It is respectfully submitted, therefore, that the amendment to claim 1 is equivalent to rewriting claim 16 in independent form. Analogously, claims 6 and 11 have been amended to incorporate the subject matter of claims 17 and 18, respectively. Therefore, amended independent claims 1, 6, and 11 are

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now allowable over the prior art. Because they depend from an allowable independent claim, dependent claims 2-5, 7-10, and 12-15, are also allowable.

Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that the prior art rejections of claims 1-15 be reconsidered and withdrawn.

CONCLUSION

Wherefore, in view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, this application is considered to be in condition for allowance, and an early reconsideration and a Notice of Allowance are earnestly solicited.

This Amendment does not increase the number of independent claims, does not increase the total number of claims, and does not present any multiple dependency claims. Accordingly, no fee based on the number or type of claims is currently due. However, if a fee, other than the issue fee, is due, please charge this fee to SIDLEY AUSTIN LLP Deposit Account No. 18-1260.

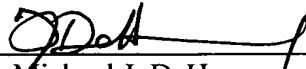
If an extension of time is required to enable this document to be timely filed and there is no separate Petition for Extension of Time filed herewith, this document is to be construed as also constituting a Petition for Extension of Time Under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136(a) for a period of time sufficient to enable this document to be timely filed.

Any other fee required for such Petition for Extension of Time and any other fee required by this document pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 and 1.17, other than the issue fee,

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and not submitted herewith should be charged to SIDLEY AUSTIN LLP Deposit Account
No. 18-1260. Any refund should be credited to the same account.

Respectfully submitted,

By: 
Michael J. DeHaemer
Registration No. 39,164
Attorney for Applicant

MJD:llb:bar
SIDLEY AUSTIN LLP
717 N. Harwood, Suite 3400
Dallas, Texas 75201
Direct: (214) 981-3335
Main: (214) 981-3300
Facsimile: (214) 981-3400
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